

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SCCT-01 /064 W

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R 201458Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1447

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

US MISSION USUN NEW YORK 2782

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E.O. 11652: N/A DECON 11/20/75

TAGS: PINS, IS, XF

SUBJECT: PLO RESPONSIBILITY FOR BET SHEAN ATTACK

REF: TEL AVIV 6677

1. PLO NEWS AGENCY (WAFA) CIRCULATED STATEMENT HERE
NOV 19 QUOTING DAMASCUS SPOKESMAN FOR "GENERAL COMMAND,
PALESTINE REVOLUTION FORCES" (TITLE GENERALLY USED BY
FEDAYEEN TO DENOTE PLO MILITARY HIGH COMMAND) AS HAVING
ANNOUNCED THAT BET SHEAN OPERATION WAS IN PROGRESS
AT 0600 GMT. EARLIER, AT 0400 GMT NOV 19, HAWATMEH'S
PDFLP ISSUED SEPARATE COMMUNIQUE IN DAMASCUS CLAIMING
RESPONSIBILITY FOR OPERATION AND ALLEGING IT WAS
MOUNTED BY "OUR FORCES" OPERATING ENTIRELY WITHIN
"OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. PDFLP STATED, INTER ALIA,
THAT OPERATION WAS RETALIATION FOR RECENT ISRAELI

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ATTACKS ON PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON AS WELL AS FOR GOI'S
"VIOLENT REPRESSION" OF "PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS ORGA-

NIZED BY OUR MASSES IN PALESTINE IN JUBILATION OVER PALESTINIAN VICTORY AT UN". IT ADDED THAT BET SHEAN OPERATION WAS NAMED AFTER MUNTABA AWAD HOURANI, WEST BANK SCHOOL GIRL WHO REPORTEDLY DIED OF INJURIES SUSTAINED IN RECENT DEMONSTRATIONS AT JENIN. SECOND PDFLP COMMUNIQUE CIRCULATED HERE LATE NOV 19, VOWED THAT SUCH ATTACKS WOULD CONTINUE UNTIL "PALESTINE IS LIBERATED FROM ZIONIST OCCUPATION".

2. SAME SENTIMENTS WERE ECHOED HERE BY HAWATMEH IN INTERVIEW CARRIED BY FRENCH-LANGUAGE L'ORIENT-LE JOUR NOV 20. PDFLP CHIEFTAIN ALSO RAMBLED ON AT LENGTH ABOUT BET SHEAN OPERATION BEING "INTEGRAL PART OF OUR STRUGGLE ON POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC LEVELS". HE PURPORTED TO SEE NO CONFLICT BETWEEN SUCH ATTACKS AND PLO OBJECTIVES AT UN, TERMING THEM "COMPLEMENTARY" AND "INDIVISIBLY LINKED" TO OVERALL PLO STRATEGY OF ESTABLISHING "INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AUTHORITY" AS "FIRST STEP TOWARD A TOTAL, DEMOCRATIC SOLUTION OF PALESTINE QUESTION" AND OF DEFEATING "PIECEMEAL SOLUTION" ALLEGEDLY SOUGHT BY US, ISRAEL AND JORDAN.

3. COMMENT: GIVEN WELL KNOWN AND CLOSELY-KNIT RELATIONSHIP THAT CURRENTLY EXISTS BETWEEN HAWATMEH'S PDFLP AND SO-CALLED "MODERATE" FEDAYEEN LEADERSHIP, WE INTERPRET PDFLP COMMUNIQUE, Wafa STATEMENTS AND HAWATMEH'S REMARKS AS CLEAR SIGNS THAT BET SHEAN RAID WAS NOT RPT NOT SIMPLY A MAVERICK ADVENTURE MOUNTED BY "DISSIDENT" FEDAYEEN ELEMENTS. THERE IS EVERY INDICATION THAT IT ENJOYED BLESSING, EVEN IF ONLY AFTER THE FACT, OF BLUK OF PLO LEADERSHIP. LATTER, OF COURSE, WILL SEEK REFUGE IN SPURIOUS PDFLP CLAIM THAT BET SHEAN INCIDENT WAS ENTIRELY A "HOME-GROWN" AFFAIR INVOLVING PALESTINIAN "RESISTANCE FORCES" OERATING WITHIN ISRAEL. ALTHOUGH THIS OVERWORKED DODGE -- TOGETHER WITH "FIGHT AND TALK" BLATHER PUT FORWARD BY HAWATMEH AND OTHER FEDAYEEN THEORETICIANS " STILL COMMANDS WIDESPREAD SYMPATHY HERE (AND PROBABLY IN OTHER ARAB CAPITALS), WE WOULD LIKE TO THINK IT WILL FOOL FEW PEOPLE OUTSIDE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ME, INCLUDING (ONE WOULD HOPE) MANY DELEGATIONS WHICH MAY OTHERWISE BE FAVORABLY DISPOSED TO PLO'S ATTEMPTS TO PROJECT "MODERATE" IMAGE DURING CURRENT DEBATE AT UNGA. GODLEY

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